

From the Author's
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THE
USE AND ABUSE OF THIS WORLD:

A
SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ST. BENE'T GRACECHURCH,

IN THE

City of London,

On Sunday, Oct. 9, 1796;

AND

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE AUDIENCE.

By WILLIAM JONES, M.A,

AUTHOR OF THE *MAN OF SIN*, &c.

L O N D O N:

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TO THE REVEREND

GEORGE GASKIN, D. D.

RECTOR OF ST. BENE'T GRACECHURCH.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN I delivered the following Discourse in your pulpit, I did not foresee that the audience would require me to print it. At the request of good people, I have already printed more sermons, and within a shorter time, than I intended, or desired. The subject of this present one being almost as wide as the world of which it treats; I would have kept it awhile longer under my eye, for the chance of some farther improvements: but if your Congregation are disposed to accept it in its present imperfect state, I ought to submit without scruple to their good

intentions. On one account, I am pleased with the accident: it gives me a fair opportunity of expressing my regard and affection for *you*, who serve the Church at large, by dedicating your life, as Mr. *Broughton*, that eminent example of piety, did before you, to the *business* of Christianity, as well as to the other common offices of devotion and charity.

In return for the honour your Congregation have done to me, I can wish them nothing better, than that they may distinguish wisely, and receive faithfully, the blessings they may derive from your ministry.

This Epistle is the smallest testimony due to your merits, from,

Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate Brother in Christ,

And humble Servant,

NAYLAND,
Nov. 10, 1796.

WILLIAM JONES.

A SERMON.

1 COR. vii. 31.

And they that use this world as not abusing it.

TO distinguish properly between the use of this world, and the abuse of it, is the part of every wise man; and happy will it be for him, if, when he knows this distinction, he makes it a rule of action; ~~which doubtless~~ it will seldom fail to direct him. How common is it for men to render their lives insignificant to others, and troublesome to themselves, for want of knowing, and observing this plain distinction! The life of man is, and will be, short, when we do our best; and it must be often disturbed, by the ways of other people, over whom we have no power: but after all, most of the evils which man finds in this

life, are of his own making. Natural and necessary evils may be great, but artificial evils are much greater: and so true is this, that if the case were properly related, with all circumstances, it would be generally found, that of those unhappy wretches, who drive themselves *out of the world*, the far greater number are brought to this extremity, by their abuse of it. They first spoil the world by their folly, then dislike it, and at last leave it in despair. Great effects often follow from little causes; on which account, the nature of effects and causes in human life should be minutely observed, that we may know how to avoid the beginnings of danger; and if we cannot be so great, or so happy, as we may be tempted to wish, we may at least not be the authors of our own misery.

There are so many plain matters of fact to prove what I say, that the subject before us may be seen, and understood, by every person that will cast his eye upon it. It will be therefore profitable for us to survey some of the chief of those things, which this world presents to us; and having considered what their natural and proper use is, according to the intention of Providence; then to compare the

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the conduct of men in respect to them, and note the effect that conduct must necessarily have upon themselves. By this rule, we may examine ourselves, and others; and having done so, we shall see better what human life is, and be taught how to use it.

The first thing which this world presents to us, is *Time*, which God hath given to us all. To some he gives nobility; to others wealth; to others quickness of parts; but he gives Time to all. To have life is to have time, and time is given only for its use. It is divided into day and night: the day, being light, is intended for work and labour: and the night, being a time of darkness, is made for rest. All the useful creatures which God hath made, conform themselves to this division of their time. When the sun arises, the cattle go out to pasture; the birds of the air take wing in search of food. Even the flowers of the field open their eyes, to take advantage of the light, that shines upon them, and is bringing them to perfection. All creatures are well, and easy, when they follow this order of nature. The busy man that rises early to work, is chearful in his mind; his family are living upon the fruits of his labour;

and, according to the common course of things, his days will be prolonged upon the earth. He that uses his time as he ought, will have most of it to use. A regular life is commonly a long life.

But now, what is he that abuses his time? never happy; never truly at ease; but restless, because he is useless. If he be rich and idle, he can afford to turn night into day. When the night comes, nature would shut his eyes; but folly keeps them open: and what is contrary to nature cannot be without injury to the health and spirits. He that is busy in the night, must rest in the day: if he be a poor man, his affairs go to ruin; if he be a rich man, his health and mind suffer. With irregularity he loses his prudence, and with that he loses his fortune: for woe be to the man, who in a world of so much danger, is not careful to keep his head clear, and his wits about him. If the watchful man scarcely escapes, what must become of one who is stupid with sloth, or giddy with pleasure and dissipation? A regular orderly life is generally prolonged; an irregular life is shortened; and how often do we see, that he who lives in the world to no purpose, is sent out of it before his time!

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The case is so plain with respect to the use and abuse of Time; that we may go on to another article; which shall be that of *wealth*.

What we call wealth has no intrinsic value of its own; it is valued for the sake of what it will procure; and when it procures nothing, it is worth nothing: but as its nature is, to *answer all things*; it gives us the command of all things. And what a noble opportunity is this! The rich man has the means of improving himself in wisdom, and knowledge; he can obtain all the information he desires: he can buy light; light for his mind to see by; while others of less ability are obliged to sit in their own darkness. This is one great purpose, for which wealth is bestowed; but it is not the only one: for wealth is given to *some* for the sake of *all*. God is no respecter of persons, but appoints some as his stewards and agents, for the benefit of others. On which consideration, no man has a right to consider himself as an absolute proprietor, with power to dispose of every thing he has, according to his own will. No: the Creator is the only proprietor, who is *possessor of heaven and earth*: and when man giveth

giveth to any, he resembles God, who giveth to all. Not he that *receives* most is the greatest, but he that *gives* most, because he is most like to God; which consideration alone is sufficient to prove, that it is *more blessed to give than to receive*. What a divine pleasure is it, to see others relieved in their wants, or gratified in their expectations, by any thing we have to bestow. The mind that delights in this, can find no higher or purer pleasure upon earth: and it is a pleasure that does not end with this world, but reaches to a better; it lays up treasure in heaven. Such is the use of wealth. But the abuse of it does great mischief: for as it furnishes an opportunity of more wisdom, when well used, its abuse corrupts the heart, breeds idleness, and nourishes folly. Instead of making others happy, it makes the possessor himself miserable: it puts him into a dangerous situation, by multiplying his temptations, and his opportunities of sin: so that it might well be said, *how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* If he bestows that upon himself in wantonness, which he ought to bestow upon others; he becomes vain, selfish, and hard-hearted. Instead of being loved, he

is hated: for nothing is more odious than pride and selfishness: and how must that man feel in his own mind, who is sensible that nobody loves him? All his wealth will never make him amends, for such a loss. Wealth is therefore (as you will find all other things to be) either good or bad, the means of happiness or misery, according to the use that is made of it.

This will appear farther, when we consider the use of meat and drink, for the support of man's life. To the hungry man, what a comfort it is to eat; and to the thirsty and faint, how pleasant it is to drink. Great reason, therefore, we have, especially in this plentiful season, to be thankful to the author of all good, when he gives us food sufficient for us. But for what end is it given? To enable us to carry on the necessary business of life; and that our support may be such as our work requires. This is the use of food: man eats and drinks that he may work: therefore the idle man forfeits his right to his daily bread; and the Apostle lays down a rule both just and natural; that *if any man will not work, neither should he eat.*

But no sooner do we fall into abuse and excess, than we are sure to suffer for it, in mind and in body; either with sickness, or ill-temper, or vicious inclinations; or with all of them at once. It is with men, as it is with cattle. If we feed a horse properly, he is able to work: if he be over-fed, he is high-spirited and kicks; and perhaps may break his own neck, as well as that of his rider. We may know how necessary moderate living is to the temper, if we observe how high living disposes the mind to riot and mischief. Besides; it has an effect directly contrary to its nature: for as man is enabled to work, by eating what is sufficient; he is hindered from working, and becomes heavy, idle, and stupid, if he takes too much. As to the bodily distempers, that are occasioned by excess, there is no end of them. How often do the limbs of men become useless, which were given that they might use them in their necessary occupations? Gluttony breeds apoplexy; drunkenness sometimes ends in a dropsy, or a fever, or even in fury and madness. By seeking too much enjoyment, we have no enjoyment at all. Ungovernable appetite leads to ungovernable passions; to a clouded under-

understanding ; to a miserable life ; and often to a speedy death. When we use that gift of God to destroy us, which was intended to preserve us, then we are fools indeed.

Consider next, what is the use of our *clothing* ? It was intended, as its name signifies, in the first language of mankind, to cover shame. Another use of it, especially in such a climate as ours, is to protect us from the coldness of the air, and the roughness of the weather. It serves likewise as a mark, to distinguish the different orders, and degrees, amongst mankind. But soon enter vanity and fashion, and turn it all into absurdity. Fashion is so variable, that the study of it absolutely fills up the lives of some people ; and helps to swallow up the fortunes of others. New fashions are continually arising ; some of which are foolish and monstrous, and make the wearers ridiculous ; others are so unnatural and inconvenient, that they make them uneasy : yet they must all be followed. To this foolish servitude, the world has given its sanction ; and it is submitted to. So much thought is taken for the body, *what it shall put on*, that if we were to read the history of some people's lives, we should hear of nothing
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but of what they put on, and what they put off. The mind is little thought of: the putting off the *old man*, and the putting on of the *new man*, are subjects little studied, and little understood; though upon this alone depends our admission into the presence of God, and the fashion in which we must appear to all eternity.

We have another matter to consider, which would require many words, if it were properly treated, and according to its importance: I mean, that society which God hath ordained of man and woman, for their mutual help and comfort in life. If this be according to the laws of God, it leads to happiness: if according to the laws of sin, it leads to misery and death. The estate of matrimony is wise, and holy, and honourable; and if it proves to be, what God designed it always should be, it is the most happy in the world. It was the state of man, in the time of his innocency: and even now innocency is gone, it is a relief under all the cares of life: poverty and labour are more tolerable: sickness is less afflicting; disappointments are diminished, and blessings are increased. All this is, or may be, true; and the profane jests of the libertine

time signify nothing. We argue with God on our side, and are in no fear of being mistaken. It is certain, that from a common relation to a family of children, a friendship arises out of matrimony, such as the world can never produce, from any other relation in life: and, as friendship is one of the first of blessings, so far as paradise can be recovered by us, in this state of mortality, it must be found here, or nowhere.

But, who can describe the miseries which arise from all abuses of the relation between the sexes? True and lawful society renders life innocent and happy: false society never fails to end in wretchedness, and corruption of every kind. For the *man*, if a libertine, has no real friend; such as he ought to have: he can never expect to find it in any partner of his iniquity. The *woman* has no protector, on whom she can depend; but is left to scorn, to beggary, to infamy, and wretchedness. How much there is of this wretchedness in the world, they only can tell, who are acquainted with the crooked paths of life; of which, honest men know but little. However, a great deal of it must be known to all mankind. In every place we need not go far
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for some shameful and wretched examples of vice and ruin: out of which, the hand of God may be able to save; but the hand of man cannot; because it is not in man's power to change a lost character. How can I say more in few words on the subject than this? that as matrimony is the institution of God, for man's good (perhaps for the salvation of his soul), so whoredom is the institution of the devil; for man's destruction in this world, and perhaps for his damnation in the next. How careful then ought we to be, to do all we can, by vigilance, by example, by discipline and correction, to save from ruin those who are going headlong to perdition; blinded by their passions, and corrupted by the licentiousness of the times, or the bad examples of the place wherein they live. They see not the gulph of misery into which they are hastening: they lose themselves; they lose the world; and they lose (which is the greatest of all calamities) the grace of God, and his favour; which is worse than the loss of life: and all this, by not following the commandment of God for the right use of the world. They that follow other commandments of their own lusts, may seem to be easy and happy

happy under them, for a time; but that is no more than a bait; which the devil offers, when he means to have a lost soul in return.

As the states of men, so all their faculties, have their use and their abuse. How excellent is the use of speech, when applied to the instruction, admonition, or consolation of others! It is to the mind, what light, and medicine, and food, are to the body: it can enlighten the ignorant; feed the hungry; heal the sick. In these cases, the speech of a man is like the voice of an angel from heaven. But, how shamefully is it misapplied; for corrupting the manners; for railing, for cursing, for blaspheming, and setting the world on fire. What should the idle, the ignorant, or the vicious man speak, when he has nothing good to speak upon? ~~When~~ his talk degenerates into empty jesting, to provoke laughter; and to make those *merry*, whom he is not able to make *wise*. Though, in such a case, it be the speech of a man; it is but little better than the noise of a beast. When a beast uttereth its voice, the subject is that only, which it knoweth naturally; and the subjects, on which the natural man speaketh, are nearly the same; and then his speech is but

little better than a brutish noise ; sometimes it is worse ; for beasts can neither curse man, nor blaspheme their maker.

Music, nearly allied to speech, is another faculty which man hath : and how noble is it, when it celebrates the praise and glory of God, or recommends lessons of wisdom to man ; which was the use of it, in very ancient times. It calms the passions ; inspires devotion ; and raises the mind above itself ; as if it were carried upon wings of air toward the heaven above. It has therefore always been used in religious worship, by Christians, Jews, and Heathens. But how little and low is it, when applied in a light insipid form, to enervate the mind : or in songs of drunkards and debauchees, to inspire corruption of manners : to weaken the reason, and inflame the passions.

I might go on to shew the like as to many other particulars ; but we have seen enough to convince us. Let us now ask ; who gave us all things, but God ? for which his name is ever to be praised : and he that gave them, has taught the use of them. When we follow his rules, we are like to do well, and are never disappointed : the world is then to us,

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what it might be to *all*; for godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come: it is not more surely the way to glory above, than to peace and comfort below. Who is it that leads us into the *abuse* of all things, but the devil; whose pride and malice have no delight, but in spoiling, perverting, and defacing, the works and the gifts of God? If man observes the laws of God, they give to him, and to the world, an alliance with heaven: but the laws of the devil infuse the poison of hell into all the comforts upon earth; and create torments in the present time, which are preparatory to those of eternity.

If I were to meet with two men, one of whom uses the world, while the other abuses it; and both these characters were complete in their kind; I would shew them to you: but if we cannot find them, let us form them. Before they are known, we may affirm of them in general, that the one is a wise man, and the other a fool. The wise follows the order which God hath appointed in the use of his *time*: he works with the light, he rests with the darkness; his time is therefore of its natural value; and the regularity of it gives

a habit of activity and chearfulness to his mind. His *wealth*, when it has supplied his own wants, supplies the wants of others; and brings down, upon his head, the blessings of the widow and the fatherless. He *clothes* not himself for vanity and shew, but for decency and convenience: he can therefore afford to put clothes upon the naked. He *eats* and *drinks* for health and refreshment; and his wits are always with him. As he feeds not to excess, he can spare something to feed the hungry. If he be the father of a family; he is their friend and protector: he looks upon them with kindness and affection; and they look up to him with gratitude and delight. His *speech* is with grace; and his words are the words of truth and soberness: the ignorant derive light from it, and the afflicted help and comfort. Hymns and psalms give calmness and sweetness to his mind; and when God is exalted, he is lifted toward heaven; which place he will reach at last; for his charities and his affections went thither before him.

Such may be, and such, by the blessing of God, hath been the life and the end of many a wise man: but what is the other? what is the

the servant of sin? He begins with folly, and ends with misery. His time has neither order nor value: a thousand years of such time would be worth nothing. His object is pleasure; but he is always out of the road: for an *unnatural* world can never prove to be a *pleasant* world. His wealth is devoured by himself; or lost and squandered away upon hawks and harpies; who would tear the flesh off his bones, and never thank him, for any thing they get by him. By eating, or drinking to excess, his understanding is darkened; his body is distempered; and his life is cut short. The ill company he keeps at home, by their faithlessness and ingratitude, disappoint him, distress him, and ruin him: and, in the end, he treats them, and they treat him, with mutual curses and accusations. As to his conversation, the best of it is seasoned with foolish jesting, and the worst of it is poisoned with blasphemy. His music is the noise of intoxication; it gives glory to vice and folly; and his mirth is the crackling of thorns under a pot, which consume themselves, with their own blaze. When he has done what mischief he can to himself and others, he comes to his last hour; but there
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is no comfort to be found ! a dreadful gulph is before him ; God hath not been in all his thoughts ; the world which he abused is going from him ; and a worse is coming ; toward which, every step of his life was leading him ; but he saw not the end.

The two men I have now been describing appear like the inhabitants of two different worlds. They certainly belong to two classes of beings ; the first to the *children of light* ; the other to the poor disappointed children of this world, who *love darkness rather than light*.

Methinks I hear some of you cry out, “ What would I give to be like the first of these men ? ” And hath not God called you for this very end, and taught you *how* to be like him ; and promised to assist you, in the *endeavour* to make yourself like him ? If you dread the other character, hath not God taught you how to avoid it ? Has he not forewarned you of the *deceitfulness of sin* ; what a cheat it is ; and how it betrays into certain misery ? Conquered you may be ; but you never can be taken by surprise, when you have had so many warnings.

You may now see by example, that man is the maker of most evils : far the greater part

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are occasioned by the abuse of this world ; and they are in most danger of abusing it, who have most of it in their possession. Men look up to them with admiration for what they have got, and praise the happiness of their situation ; but, unless they have wisdom along with their riches, they are to be pitied, rather than envied, for their temptations and dangers. The poor man has not so much to fear, yet *he* can find ways of abusing the world to his own ruin : so that all men, rich and poor, should learn in time, what it is to use it wisely : if they do not, they see the consequence ; the whole subject has been reduced to matter of fact.

And now, who can behold, without sorrow of heart, what man *is*, when it is considered what he *might* be ! But how dreadful does the case become, when it is added, that man has but *one* life to live in this world ; if he throws *that* away, there is no second trial : he never returns to correct his mistake ; he is never permitted to try the world over again ; and if he were to try it a thousand times, he would always miscarry, if he is not with God, and God is not with him.

Thrice

Thrice happy, then, is he, who looking up to God, and following his rules, and depending upon his protection, is in the way of deliverance: who, looking upon the world as a wide ocean, sees others tossed in the storm, while his own feet are upon firm land; who, having used this world according to the sense of the Apostle in the text, shall be admitted to the use of a better, where there shall be neither abuses nor offences, but righteousness and peace without end, and without interruption.

F I N I S.

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